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Citation

Raadschelders, J. C. N. (2012). *An a-disciplinary public administration for a diverse society: historical, ontological, epistemological and axiological reflections**. Leiden: Universiteit Leiden.
Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/19596>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)
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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

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Universiteit Leiden

An a-disciplinary public administration
for a diverse society:
historical, ontological, epistemological
and axiological reflections*

Inaugural lecture by

Prof.dr. Jos C.N. Raadschelders

upon the assumption of the office of full professor in public administration,
specifically the comparative analysis of the normative aspects of government

at the University of Leiden

Monday, June 18, 2012



Universiteit Leiden

Dear Rector Magnificus, Deans, members of the college boards, colleagues of the University of Leiden Leiden, esteemed students, much appreciated people in the audience, family and friends

[The] materialistic basis [of science] has directed attention to things as opposed to values. (Whitehead 1925, 202; emphasis in original)

Education has two purposes: on the one hand to form the mind, on the other to train the citizen. The Athenians concentrated on the former, the Spartans on the latter. The Spartans won, but the Athenians were remembered. (Russell [1931] 1962, 243)

One of the chief practical obstacles to the development of social inquiry is the existing division of social phenomena into a number of compartmentalized and supposedly independent non-interacting fields, as in the different provinces assigned, for example to economics, politics, jurisprudence, morals, anthropology, etc. [...] It is legitimate to suggest that there is an urgent need for breaking down these conceptual barriers so as to promote cross-fertilization of ideas... (Dewey 1938, 508)

...the social sciences had been monopolized by those more interested in the discovery of laws than in the welfare of society. (Commager 1950, 205)

A disciplinary field can hardly attain the sophisticated level of scholarship which is worthy of graduate education if it is not capable of critically developing from within itself its epistemological foundations. (Ramos 1981, 102)

We're beginning to recognize that God did not create the universe according to the departmental structure of our research universities (Armstrong, in Honan 1994)

The study of public administration caters to both academic and career civil service audiences, to those in the non-profit, non-governmental and private sector worlds, and to citizens. By all accounts, and especially since the 1970s, the study has been very successful when measured in terms of growing

research output and thus of generalist and specialist journals, of independent public administration programs and thus of public administration faculty, and of the amount of grant and consulting work done by academics thus continuing to connect academe and practice. In every decade since this blossoming of the study some have liked to take stock of the state of the art of public administration research, attempting to categorize trends and discern from these where the study might be heading in the (near) future and in what topical areas the study could and/or should expand its research efforts (see for overview of this literature and for trends in the past decade, Raadschelders and Lee 2011).

While public administration scholarship has been building an impressive body of knowledge based on original research as well as on mining the contributions of other studies and disciplines insofar as these knowledge sources are relevant to understanding government, it appears to be limiting itself to extrapolating how the study might develop from recent and current (perhaps even fashionable?) topical interests. It would behoove any study, though, that has become mature in terms of productivity, people, and programs, to explore the foundations and assumptions upon which its knowledge rests so that a course toward the future can be charted in which topical knowledge, as generated through research and disseminated through education, is embedded in foundations made explicit.

The study rests upon at least four foundations, each of which do not receive sufficient attention. First, we need more attention to philosophy in the study of public administration¹ (e.g. Van Braam 1989) so that its graduates - most of whom will pursue careers outside academe - can recognize the premises and sources of knowledge in the study. Second, public administration scholars also need to pay more attention to philosophy of government (e.g. Dimock 1958), so that its graduates have an understanding of government that propels them beyond being technocrats digging in their toolkits for

the right instruments. Any public affairs program should inform its students of the values and premises upon which their governments operate. An informed citizenry and public officialdom is one that embraces rather than shies away from value-laden considerations. Third, attention is equally needed to instill an understanding of how various underpinnings and perspectives in a philosophy of the study inform the various philosophical underpinnings and perspectives of government in society and vice versa (e.g. Hodgkinson 1982). Indeed, we cannot claim that knowledge generation in academe is value-less and that this knowledge has no influence upon values underlying public sector decision and policy making. Conversely, can scholars truly claim that their research is not at all influenced by values held in government and society? Fourth, and finally, we need more attention for the impact that history (as recording activity) and the past have on how we theorize about, act upon, and respond to today's challenges (Raadschelders 1998a, 2010b). It is the first element, a philosophy of public administration, that will be emphasized in this lecture but attention will be given to normative considerations. It is upon these four foundations that research in general rests, yet, while most effort is spent on the technicalities of research (and then especially of logical-empiricist work) attention for these four foundations seem a bit of stepchild. Why is this so?

Much of the study's academic research is focused on providing insight and solutions to practical problems through empirical and evidence-based research, which leaves much less time for reflection upon the nature of government and the nature of the study. This is intriguing for two reasons: 1) since the 1960s trust in government institutions has been declining, and 2) disagreement persists about public administration's academic status. In this lecture I will focus mainly on the latter, but shall very briefly mention why this is important for understanding declining trust in government, and how the study can help practitioners respond to societies' demands.

Some scholars believe that the study lacks discipline and should acquire such through methodological rigor; others hold that the study caters to a real world that cannot be captured adequately in a singular approach. Several reasons are conceivable as to why there is less or even little reflection upon the nature of the study. First, it could be because many public administration scholars probe societal problems and governmental challenges that seemingly require immediate attention and resolution. They argue that evidence-based, empirical research that actually makes a difference in the real world is more valuable than reflections upon the nature of knowledge in the study. It is even implicitly assumed that the pursuit of evidence-based research will lead to a clearer academic identity (see below). Several other reasons are actually not limited to public administration scholars but pertain to social scientists at large, especially those educated since the 1980s.

Second, many social scientists are mainly concerned with the present, disregard the past, and develop little sensitivity to how their research fits in a context that is larger than the topical area of their work. That is, their work is more driven by the need to position themselves in the relevant and current literature than by the effort to place it in time and context. Furthermore, many research outcomes are presented as generalizations without concern for the specific circumstances (time and context) in and upon which the research was completed. Although intended for replication research in different geographical, organizational, and cultural settings, remarks in the discussion and concluding sections of journal articles about the limitations of findings are often shallow and obligatory.

Third, many scholars are not educated in explicating their understanding of the reality they investigate. They work with datasets and hypotheses that are disconnected from yet generated in a rather specific understanding of reality. The difference, for instance, between the belief that reality can

be objectively known, on the one hand, and the belief that reality is socially constructed on the other has significant consequences for what and how one can know (this will be discussed in more detail below), as well for how and what one expects is possible with regard to remedying, improving, altering, adapting, and so on, a specific situation or problem.

This third consideration leads into the fourth, which is that many scholars do not inquire into what and how they can know. They play with the data and show great sophistication in modeling and quantitative analyses, but are less inclined to consider whether the data actually provide an adequate representation of the reality they seek to describe. In fact, many social scientists describe reality in factual terms, but do so without explicit attention to how these facts were established. Who decided what to measure, what data to gather? Furthermore, any consideration of knowledge bases and frameworks appears to be relegated to philosophy, creating - as Kant called it - scientific experts who possess “cyclopean erudition” but lack the eye of philosophy (1988, 50) prompting him to observe that “Nobody cares about wisdom, because it makes science, which is a tool of vanity, rather small”. (1996, 28, note 30)

Finally, fifth, those social scientists who believe that reality can be objectively known, also believe that their scholarship is only scientific when perceiving social reality as a series of facts that are separated from values. This fact-value separation is not only an issue (and possibly a problem) in academe but also a challenge in the world of the practitioner, where - as far as career civil servants are concerned - policies and decisions are presented to and legitimized before the public as based on scientifically collected facts by scientifically trained experts, implicitly excluding the larger citizenry from substantive participation beyond the required referendum or hearing. But, knowing that citizens express higher contentment with public service delivery when its consumption is their choice rather than coerced (Brown 2007, 568), we can also safely assume that

in a variety of cases the quality of policy making not only gains by including citizens (e.g. Lindblom 1990) but also by being open and up-front about the values underlying choices that are ultimately political.² Hegel’s characterization of civil servants as the new universal class, the new guardians of democracy whose expert advice is to advise the ruler (Hegel 1991, par.287-303; see also Brooks 2006), is no longer acceptable in a highly literate society. Instead, civil servants now advise both ruler(s) and citizen(s); and in that role they could, and perhaps should, be called upon to outline the justifications for policy decisions. In the words of Yates:

If bureaucrats do not illuminate, analyze, and educate citizens about value conflicts, what other institutions will? The simple point is that ... it is clearly not in the standard operating procedure of other major political institutions to perform this normative role. (1981, 46)

The remainder of this text is centered on the question of what we should do to outline a future for the study that is sufficiently comprehensive for the practitioner and academic alike and has a clear academic identity. This question cannot but be preceded by another, ‘What is the nature of the study of public administration?’ which became increasingly pressing as its academic identity was questioned from the 1960s on in terms of being in some sort of crisis. At least three solutions to this identity crisis have been suggested: (a) organizing the study around a core concept, (b) advancing methodological rigor (i.e. knowledge based on science narrowly defined: see below), or (c) becoming a professional school. None however generated a sufficient or substantial following. Could it be that a solution of public administration’s alleged identity crisis should be sought more in historical, ontological, epistemological, and axiological considerations? These four categories of considerations should help outline the study’s deep foundations and thus show upon what grounds the claim can be made that public administration is a mature, yet a-disciplinary study.

In the eyes of many public administration scholars, the study suffers from an identity crisis, so that one colleague even observed that, by comparison normal adolescence seemed idyllic (Rhodes et al. 1995, 1).³ Why did this question about the academic nature and status of the study become so pressing? A plausible answer requires that we must first step back in time and briefly look at the development of government itself, as well as how emerging and expanding government prompted the emergence of the study of public administration (section one).

In the first section I explore the historical development of government, as well as the study of public administration. Upon that basis, I turn in section two to the study of public administration in its contemporary academic setting, as well as show that its status is evaluated differently depending upon narrower and broader definitions of scholarship. In section three, I will discuss how these perspectives determine whether public administration can be regarded as a discipline in the nineteenth century sense, and if not, what the alternative(s) could be. Upon this basis the disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and *a-disciplinary* modes of operation of, for, and in the study are explored- that is, an exploration of what the study's challenges are when regarded as a disciplinary, as an interdisciplinary, and as an *a-disciplinary* endeavor. Once that is done, I will briefly outline in section four some of the generally neglected interdependencies among ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations of the study. Upon this argument, the fifth section is devoted to the question of what the study of public administration is. The concluding section presents a challenge to anyone who seeks to break out of the mold of "puzzle-solving" research and wishes to contribute something of value to the good society.

Some historical reflections on the emergence of government and of its study

No human being ever lived in complete isolation. People have always lived in groups of variable size. In small groups, say of

around 30-50 people, perhaps even a few hundred, communal problems could be solved on the basis of kin- and friendship relations on both a diachronic and intergenerational basis. Evolutionary biologists surmised that reciprocal altruism operates in and over time. As soon, though, as societies come to include thousands or more people, kin- and friendship relations become too feeble a basis for dealing with problems that concern the entire community. It is at that point that people, by way of trial and error (as far as we know), develop authority and decision making structures that are perceived as legitimate by all, even when no one person can claim to know everyone else. It is then that the imaginary community substitutes the physical community; it is then that government is created and established. More specifically, government emerges from within primal sedentary societies and expands through the forces of, for instance, increasing division of labor and population densities.

Looking back at the history of government, it appears to move from emergence to design. Governments emerged and as soon as people became 'aware' of their existence, they could be subjected to conscious design. For most of history governments were simply emerging, even though there were moments that people reflected about the best type of legitimate collective action in imagined communities. These reflections often took a utopian format such as in considerations about the ideal government. However, every now and then, and as time went by, people found that such reflections could actually be realized; that government was not just the product of whimsical ruler and elite behavior but could actually be the product of conscious design. The Republic of the Seven United Provinces is an example of a polity where elements of emergence (the medieval provinces; and the Burgundian marriages that united them) and a little bit of design (consider the Union of Utrecht that established a confederacy in 1579 and the decision to denounce the Spanish monarch as sovereign in 1581) were visible. The elites in the Dutch Republic were not really interested in overhauling the

existing institutional arrangements in the various provinces. Another example of the complementary nature of emergence and design is that of the United States of America, emerging as colonies in the course of 150+ years, where in the 1770s and 1780s the Founding Fathers designed a new governing structure that is still in place.

If we wish to understand the challenges that confront governments today, we need to evaluate this relation between “emergence” on the one hand and “design” on the other. For most of history governments “emerged” and changed over time. Sometimes these changes were the result of conscious reforms, such as those introduced by King Šulgi (2094-2047 BCE, middle chronology) of the Ur III state (2114-2004 BCE), the Chinese statesman Shang Yang (390-338 BCE) who helped pave the way for the Ch’in dynasty, and Napoleon whose reforms actually left its traces worldwide even though we are hardly aware of this. Often reforms were imposed from outside (think of the Napoleonic and German occupations in Western Europe), but adapted to local circumstances once the occupying country had left (Wunder 1995; Rugge 2000). Since the early modern age, several European countries colonized large parts of the world and imposed their governing structures upon existing indigenous governing arrangements. Especially in Africa this has done great harm, since the new and negotiated state boundaries literally cut through tribal areas and, in some cases, simply displaced the existing paramountcies with recognized boundaries (Davidson 1982). Presently, there is no landmass in the world, save Antarctica⁴, that is not part of a territorial state which functions through bureaucracy.

To reiterate, government as a formal institutional arrangement emerges in sedentary societies where population size prohibits face-to-face interaction of all people. It is inevitable that government emerges in imagined communities. How can such an institutional arrangement be understood? Let us assume that government is a special case of governance. *Government* refers usually to that group of institutions and organizations in which

sovereignty is invested, and whose authority is expressed in the fact that it is the only actor that (a) can make binding decisions on behalf of the entire population and (b) has the right to use force in the effort to maintain law and order.⁵ *Governance* refers to all those institutions and organizations that somehow contribute to steering society. The relation between governance and government can be conceptualized as part of a double helix, consisting of people’s genetically imprinted associative desires and capabilities on the one hand, and of formal institutional arrangements on the other (i.e. government and governance). In small societies association is expressed through kinship and friendship alone and is sufficient for dealing with problems of a collective nature. In imagined communities association cannot be but expressed in terms of citizenship, since kinship and friendship alone no longer can bind all people.

Is this little excursion into administrative history in any way relevant and/or necessary for understanding government today? Much research is focused on the here and now, but administration or government existed long before people actually started to record their actions (generally economic transactions). The notion that the emergence and development of government prompted a study of public administration, automatically leads to the conclusion that in order to conceive what the future of the study can and/or should be must be related to (a) deep understanding of the origins and subsequent development of government, (b) a deep sensitivity to the nature of current challenges that society faces and government is somehow expected to address, and, obviously, (c) to what we, citizenry at large, like the good society and its government to be and what we need to do to get there.⁶ Deep understanding of the presence of the (administrative) past (Fesler 1982) can be acquired through the study of administrative history, but having written on that in various outlets it is not necessary to reiterate the arguments as to why this is a productive endeavor (e.g. Raadschelders 1998a, 2010b). As far as current societal and governmental challenges and the good society are concerned, I will get back to these at the end of this lecture.

The study of public administration focuses on the many ways in which people in sedentary and densely populated societies manage to balance their natural desire for small scale association with the artificial necessity for (large scale) formal institutional arrangements. Hence, the study of public administration is not only about leadership, intergovernmental relations, organization and management, policy making, policy instruments, planning, budgeting and finance, and human resource management, all concerning the structure and functioning of government itself (the dominant focus of the study until the 1960s), but it is also the study of the ways in which societal associations (think not only of nongovernmental organizations, but also of churches, labor unions, sports clubs, home owners associations, common pool resource management systems (CPRs), etc.) and participative (substantive) citizenship contribute to the governance of society. Indeed, the study of public administration has since the 1960s expanded its scope significantly both with regard to types of institutional and associational arrangements studied (especially including CPRs and non-profit organizations) as well as in terms of topical interest (think of, for instance, ethics and public sector values, public sector motivation, terrorism, emergency management, election administration, e-government, collaborative management and networking, and so on and so forth).

The search for how to understand government varies with the demands of time and context. In the ancient world and up to the European late Middle Ages, understanding government was focused on ideal leadership and the ideal and/or realistic relation between ruler and ruled (think of *Kautilya's Arthaśāstra*, the medieval *Fürstenspiegel*, and Machiavelli's *The Prince*), and on physical planning (i.e. the ideal town plan). Once in Europe the territorial state, rather than the city state or the empire, had asserted itself successfully as the prime actor that bound people together and to which people increasingly would turn for services (from the twelfth century CE onward), a study of public administration emerges that is much

more practical in orientation with attention for making and implementing policy, for administrative procedures and forms, for job description of public officials, for types of ordinances, for types of official correspondence, and so on, but with an emphasis on internal mechanics of running a government (i.e. practical experience for the public servant). By the middle and late eighteenth century this also came to include attention for substantive welfare policies and services (e.g. Christiaan von Wolff; see Rutgers 2010).

In its contemporary appearance, the study of public administration emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, in response to a rapidly growing government that was increasingly expected to provide solutions to problems caused by industrialization (such as labor conditions and -exploitation, child labor, working hours), urbanization (such as lack of urban planning, overcrowding, poor sanitation, tenement housing), and rapid population growth (leading to, e.g. insufficient public health and utility services). These three major environmental changes created demand for a government for which there was no historical precedent and with which, thus, there was no experience. Public officials at all levels were suddenly occupied with “chinking in” a structure that was not created for meeting such massive and varied demands (Skowronek 1982; Raadschelders 1990; Stillman 1999, 57). Governments on both sides of the Atlantic were growing rapidly in terms of organizational differentiation (Raadschelders 1997a), regulation (Page 2001), revenue and expenditure (Webber and Wildavsky 1986), and personnel size (Raadschelders 1994), and practitioners wanted guidance about how to deal with this new phenomenon. Hence, the study's interests were very practical, but concerning needs external to government (i.e. services to people), and outlined by practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic.⁸ They needed usable knowledge about principles of management, leadership, and organization but wanted these embedded in a much broader curriculum that included attention for history, law, economics, politics, and ethics so as to assure that (future) civil servants would have a broad (generalist's) understanding of the

society they were to serve (Hoffmann 2002). From the 1930s on, some scholars in the study advocated a more scientific, logical-empiricist approach, while others continued to regard the study more in its classical 'practical wisdom' approach (which nowadays also includes critical theory) and/or in its earlier 'practical experience' manifestation. In recent decades, the study has been enriched by critical theory, pragmatism, and action theory and by the relativist or postmodern perspectives, that include, among others, hermeneutics, narrativism, interpretivism, and phenomenology.

Elsewhere I distinguished four intellectual approaches to the study, i.e. practical wisdom, practical experience, scientific knowledge, and relativist perspectives, and they are quite different from one another (Raadschelders 2008). In fact, they are so different that they can be regarded as a manifestation of how the study lacks a clear identity. Is it a science, a craft or profession, or an art? (Lynn 1996) Can it be all of these and, if so, what does that mean for the nature and future of the study? This question is important in light of the enormous growth of independent public administration programs (i.e. organizationally independent from law, organizational studies, political science) since the 1970s in the United States (Raadschelders 2011a, 141) and Western Europe (Verheijen and Connaughton 1999, 2003), since the 1980s in India, Japan, and South Korea (Raadschelders 2009), and since the 2000s in China and in other Asian and various African and Latin American countries.

This question on art, craft, profession, science, or all of the above, will be addressed in three steps. First, what is characteristic for today's approach to science? This question will be addressed in the second section which gives attention to (a) two rather different definitions of 'science,' (b) the definition of 'discipline,' (c) the fact that scientific studies allegedly must have boundaries, (d) the issue of how reality can and is perceived, and (e) the issue of what characterizes the social sciences today. This general section is necessary for understanding the specific nature of public administration.

Second, what would public administration look like if it were a discipline? Finding that it can never be a 'discipline' we must determine why this is so. Thus, we need to look at its lack of boundaries, at who defines its object of study, and whether the study's identity crisis is unique or common (section three).

Finally, in section four the argument is made that public administration is an a-disciplinary study that faces various challenges. First is that government has distinct local, regional, national, and international features, and each of these jurisdictional levels have overlapping as well as different needs. Second, that the study must connect micro- and macro levels of analysis, hence combining research that builds upon insight of individual-based data with institutional approaches that probe the context in which human beings inevitably operate. Third, that in an academic world that thrives on and embraces specialization (in terms of knowledge, method, and organization), and in a practitioner world that trumpets expertise, the study must provide a generalist outlook especially for middle and higher level career civil servants (see Hoffmann 2002).⁹ This means, fourth, that the study should continue to bridge practitioners and academics whose interest may, though, never really be bridged. Fifth, and finally, the study should balance attention for research as well as for education. Research requires both specialists and generalists, while education can and ought to provide the foundation for a generalist's perspective.

Todday's approach to 'science'

In the Anglo-American world, 'science' is understood and defined as a branch of study that observes and classifies facts that, in turn, describe, explain, and predict natural - and so it is hoped - social phenomena by means of 'laws'. This definition of science dates back to the eighteenth century Enlightenment, and is especially indebted to David Hume's distinction between facts (the object of science) and values (the object of politics and public opinion), a severance wholeheartedly embraced by logical empiricists of whom Herbert Simon is an excellent

representative. This definition of science is narrower than the pre-eighteenth century notion of science as a body of general knowledge (captured in the German *Wissenschaft* and in comparable terms in the Germanic languages) that strives to enhance understanding of natural and social phenomena.¹⁰ Dwight Waldo was cognizant of this distinction when observing that science could be defined as "... a body of organized knowledge." in general (i.e. *Wissenschaft*, JR), or as "...a certain type and quality of knowledge and procedure." (i.e. science) (1984, 182, endnote 50) In science broadly defined as *Wissenschaft*, the emphasis is on epistemology: How are knowledge claims justified? How do we define knowledge? What are the sources of knowledge? What is the relation between the object of knowledge and the researcher? Science narrowly defined is much more focused on methodology and methods, simply as a function of believing that a logistical-empiricist¹¹ epistemology is the only basis for scientific knowledge. What methods of analysis can be used to support knowledge claims? How are data collected and analyzed in the effort to answer a specific question? While epistemology is focused on the *philosophy* of what we can know, methodology concerns the *practice* of how we can know and, thus, focuses on methods. Logical empiricist epistemology holds that what we can know are observable facts; interpretivist methodologies, instead, accepts that we can know much more (feelings, intuitions, understandings; cf. Max Weber's *Einfühlung*).

Scholars have attempted to classify bodies of knowledge as early as Antiquity. For instance, Aristotle divided the sciences ("knowledges") in three branches: the theoretical sciences aimed at truth (e.g. mathematics), the practical sciences served to achieve good actions (e.g. medicine, politics; and we can add administration), and the productive sciences strived to perfect things (e.g. poetry, rhetoric) (Mahdi 1971, 229). Since the seventeenth century, it is common to distinguish between the natural sciences (that study natural phenomena), the social sciences (that study social phenomena), and the humanities (that study humankind's creative expressions).

Within each of these three main branches, various bodies of knowledge are demarcated from one another on the basis of object of study. Traditionally, i.e. since the nineteenth century, a body of knowledge is a 'discipline' when characterized by a consistent and coherent set of concepts and theories that explain a particular set of phenomena (this is what Kuhn calls a paradigm) and is clearly demarcated from other disciplines. Determining which concepts and theories are the best, what research ought to be done, and what constitutes high quality research is the sole province of the community of scholars in a discipline. Excellent examples of disciplines in the natural sciences are mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. In the social sciences, examples could include psychology and economics, although they cannot claim exclusive control over the theories and research in their 'discipline.' In the humanities, the languages, the fine arts, history, and theology are examples of disciplines. In academe as organized since the nineteenth century, a scholar of Chinese is not expected to judge the quality of a fine arts piece beyond an emotive attraction or rejection of it. The difference between the natural sciences on the one hand, and the social sciences and humanities on the other, is that the first actually searches for, defines, and operates upon regularities and probabilities, while the latter deals - at best - with law-like generalizations.¹² Keep in mind that the previous statement is premised upon an understanding and organization of science in a nineteenth and twentieth century sense that is rapidly becoming obsolete given increasing interdisciplinarity. So far, though, these traditional disciplinary boundaries are reinforced by organizational structures such as in a department within a college (such as the Institute of Public Administration in the College of the Social Sciences, at the University of Leiden) or as school independent of existing colleges (such as the John Glenn School of Public Affairs, The Ohio State University). This has happened not only with the traditional disciplines but also with professional programs such as, for instance, Public Administration, Law, Business Administration, Social Work, Journalism and Communication Studies, International and Area Studies, and with studies focused on specific demographic

groups such as Islamic and Arabic studies in the Netherlands (consider the great tradition in these fields at the University of Leiden), and Women's Studies¹³, African-American studies, Native American Studies, and Religious Studies in the United States.

The boundaries of disciplines in the natural sciences appear to be pretty clear. However, the division between, for instance, physics and chemistry is much less clear today than it was 50 years ago. Fields of study in academe are still demarcated on the basis of nineteenth century organizational boundaries that originated in Germany. In practice, the extent of interdisciplinary work has made that structuring of fields of study in practice quite obsolete (see Riedl 1978/79). Boundaries can be somewhat clear for many of the social sciences and the humanities, as long as the object of knowledge of a specific discipline is really 'owned' by the scholars in that discipline. By way of example, it is unlikely that theologians involve themselves with the knowledge objects of colleagues who study comparative linguistics.

Initially, establishing boundaries of knowledge was intended to distinguish science from non-science (Popper 1963). Since the nineteenth century, though, it has become increasingly important to determine boundaries between and even within disciplines. This "boundary work", as Gieryn called it (1983; see also Lamont and Molnár 2002), is the instrument through which knowledge in a particular discipline is maintained, enforced, expanded, and protected (Good 2000, 387). To determine clear boundaries is easier for some disciplines than for others.

As mentioned above, the clarity of a boundary 'around' a particular discipline depends upon the extent to which its object of knowledge is 'owned' by its community of scholars and, thus, upon the extent to which its concepts and theories are unique to it. By way of example, mathematicians all over the world use a universal 'language' and work with

entirely constructed worlds. Another example concerns the community of physicists, also using a universal language and working according to a dominant paradigm (the Standard Model). They look at a particular slice of reality in a specific, agreed upon manner. The same can be said of chemists and biologists. Physicists have also come closest to the ideal of objective knowledge (though acknowledging they will never get there), that is, to the notion that knowledge exists, and thus that a reality can be observed somewhat independent from human agency. Whether people can fully access the 'reality' out there (what Kant called the *material object*) or can only observe that part of reality that is perceived through our senses (sight, smell, touch, hearing, taste) (Locke, Kant) and/or through rationality (Descartes, Kant) is a question that we may never be able to answer.¹⁴ It is, though, vital to at least think about this, since social scientists of the logical empiricist bent generally study that part of reality that is accessible through the concepts and theories (what Kant called the *formal object*) (see also Raadschelders and Rutgers 1989, 25) they develop on the basis of a combination of sensory perception and rationality, and, when embracing Hume, even more limited, only that part of reality that concerns measurable facts about observable events, actions, and responses. In the natural sciences, instruments have been developed that greatly expanded our sensory capabilities (e.g. microscope, telescope), but there is no equivalent for that in the social sciences or the humanities. Perhaps simulations and games can do something comparable in the social sciences (Heidelberg and Desai 2011), but they may not extend our observations as far as the Hubble Telescope and the Large Hadron Collider have in physics and astronomy.

The social sciences have tried hard to emulate the natural sciences¹⁵, impressed and possibly awed by the revolutionary leaps made by Newton and Einstein in physics, by Priestley and Lavoisier in chemistry, by Darwin and Mendel in biology, and so many others. Especially since the Second World War they have tried to become more scientific by means

of developing quantitative-statistical methods and using mathematical-style modeling. Indeed, 'science' in the social sciences seems to be predominantly understood and pursued in terms of methodology and methods, and, granted, great sophistication and elegance has been achieved. The social sciences appear to try and become more exact and objective through quantification, as the system management scholar Van Gigch observed (1997, 386-7; 2001a; see also Ramos 1981, 40). Going one step further, in his Nobel lecture the economist Von Hayek suggested that what is treated as important in the social sciences is that "...which happens to be accessible to measurement. This is sometimes carried to the point where it is demanded that our theories must be formulated in such terms that they refer only to measurable magnitudes." (1974) But, 'quants' and math are not the only means by which substantial effort has been spent to advance the social sciences. Grammar and syntax, apparently, is another. Thus, Starbuck, former editor of the *Administrative Science Quarterly*, recalls how in a class on mathematical social science taught by Alan Newell, Herbert Simon advised doctoral students to always use passive verbs in their essays because that indicated sufficient distance between researcher and object (Starbuck 2006, 7, 40). Impersonal detachment was apparently regarded necessary to becoming science in the narrow sense.

What stymies any social sciences' success in becoming more scientific is that its arsenal of methods allows for studying material causes only, i.e. focusing on the here and now and answering questions about how it works (Vanelli 2001, 53-55).¹⁶ Natural scientists, on the other hand, are focused on studying regularities and probabilities and address why a natural phenomenon "behaves" the way it does. One could argue that 'why' questions are also raised in the social sciences, but the difference with the natural sciences is that agreement about the 'why' of social phenomena depends very much upon interpretation of individual researchers who lack the nomological framework (i.e. a system of interrelated generalizations about a particular set of objects; what Kuhn

called a paradigm) that the various disciplines in the natural sciences have (D'Andrade 1986, 28). In the present state of physics, the standard model accommodates everything we know about the universe, but physicists do not regard this as a 'law'. In fact, they have stopped using the word 'law' and, instead, speak of regularities and of probabilities. They no longer look for the first cause (i.e. the final or ultimate cause) but, not being satisfied with the extent to which the standard model helps them to understand the universe, they will continue to look for unifying theory.

The previous considerations about science, discipline, boundaries, reality, and social science help in determining whether the study of public administration is a discipline.

Public administration as a "discipline" and its approach to research and teaching

What would the study of public administration look like if it were to achieve the coveted disciplinary status, i.e. being a body of knowledge clearly demarcated from other bodies of knowledge? Substantively, it could claim that its object of knowledge is unique to it, and - even better - that its methods of acquiring knowledge are unique to it as well. Organizationally, there would be no doubt that it was separate from other studies (e.g. law, political science, organization studies; but would and should include policy studies, management studies).¹⁷

Public administration's object of knowledge, i.e. government in its many relations with society, has attracted interest from scholars across the social sciences. This is because the unprecedented rapid growth of government (see above) and its ever-increasing penetration of society is perhaps the most pervasive social phenomenon of the past century, and perhaps even more important than the information 'revolution' and globalization of the past twenty, thirty years. As a social phenomenon no social science can afford to ignore the impact of government upon its primary research interest (psyche for

psychology; scarce resources for economics; human interaction for sociology, power for political science, etc., etc.).

The fact that most of the social sciences, and several of the humanities (e.g. philosophy, theology, history), study aspects of government means that this object of study cannot have clear disciplinary boundaries. This means that what constitutes quality of knowledge (in terms of content and method) about government is determined by a rather dispersed group of scholars (public administrationists, political scientists, economists, anthropologists, sociologists, etc.). They are, however, not the only actors who define content and quality of knowledge. Academics tend to assess quality in terms of theoretical rigor, methodological sophistication, and empirical evidence, but in the study of public administration quality of research is also evaluated in terms of usable knowledge (Lindblom and Cohen 1979) and that involves career civil servants, executive and legislative political officeholders, corporate executives, lobbyists, citizens, and representatives of interest groups. Indeed, scholars of public administration do not 'own' their object of research and they are no different in this respect from colleagues in, for instance, law, medicine, nursing, social work, engineering, business administration. Furthermore, unlike in the natural sciences there is neither paradigm at the level of the study as a whole nor in its various specializations, and this inhibits the establishment of boundaries even more. At the same time, it is important to realize that boundaries that create a 'discipline' do not in and of themselves guarantee quality and utility of knowledge.

There are two other aspects that hinder a substantively acceptable identification of boundaries for the study. First, while government is a global phenomenon in terms of structure, it is very much a local phenomenon in terms of its functioning (i.e. process and culture). Second, the boundaries of government, and thus of its study, vary with the extent of government intervention in society. Thus, a study of public administration in a nightwatch state has a much more limited

focus (e.g. maintenance of public order and safety, provisions of basic services) than one that studies the government of a welfare state. Also, governments deal with wicked and complex rather than only with simple problems (Rittel and Webber 1973, 160). Natural phenomena are definable and separable from one another and can, thus, be clearly defined and demarcated for research purposes. One example is sufficient to illustrate this point. Volcanologists study specifically and discretely the geology and science of an eruption. Governments have to deal with the consequences of such eruptions for, by way of example, air traffic, transport, evacuation of people, economic recovery, medical help, food distribution, and so forth. What to the natural scientist is a phenomenon that can be reduced to a definable and separable problem so that it can be analyzed, is a wicked problem for the social scientist and policy maker who cannot select which aspect of the problem they choose to analyze. In public administration, and generally in the social sciences, the complexity of reality is often reduced to proportions that allow observation and measurement, but no model of social reality (whether in figurational¹⁸, quantitative, or mathematical expression) actually captures reality as good as quantum mechanics so far captures the physical reality of the universe. As far as social phenomena are concerned, the only 'universal laws' are rather trivial and culturally dependent (e.g. when I hit you there is little chance you will hit me back when I am perceived as stronger than you; or, when I stick out my hand in greeting I generally will get a handshake in return in some cultures, whereas in others I may not).

Taking the complexity of the object of research as starting point, Auguste Comte concluded that the social sciences were far more complex than, for instance, pure logical disciplines (mathematics, theoretical physics) and experimental studies (physics, chemistry, biology) (Levine 1995, 164). And Meier, along the same lines, argued that the social sciences are much more challenging than the natural sciences since the former have significant design components (2005, 655). They are also

more challenging because they deal with phenomena that are inherently unstable, variable, and irregular (Kaplan 1964, 348). It is for that reason that several scholars argued that the standards of the so-called 'hard sciences' cannot be, yet have been inappropriately, applied to the social sciences (Kaplan 1964, 398; D'Andrade 1986, 39; Secord 1986, 199; Hall 1989, 33).

Generally, these natural science standards (replicability, objectivity, generalizability) are implicitly invoked in the study of public administration, and this is especially visible in the debate about its identity crisis and in judgments about the quality of its research. What, exactly, this identity crisis entails is not very clear (but see Raadschelders 1999, 287 and 2011b, 19-24)¹⁹, but there are at least three different ways that solutions have been suggested.

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First, it has been defined in terms of lacking a specific and unique theoretical and methodological core, and it is generally cast in the narrow perspective of knowledge acquired through the application of the scientific method. An excellent example of a scholar who embraced such an empiricist stance is Herbert Simon (see footnote 11) writing that he started his career in the "academic backwater" of public administration once hoping to turn it into science (1991, 114).

Second, arguing that values could not be separated from facts, Waldo considered three solutions to the identity crisis. The first, public administration as subfield in political science, he felt would not work since the study tackles so much broader a subject matter than political science, and since political science's attitude toward public administration is "...at best one of indifference and is often one of undisguised contempt or hostility." (1968a, 8)²⁰ The second option, to regard the study as a discipline, he believed to be equally unsatisfying:

It is too ambitious in believing [...] that it is possible to identify and develop a coherent body of systematic theory which will be substantially independent of other social sciences and will concern itself only with public

administration." (ibid., 9; emphasis in original). [It is not ambitious enough because] "It looks inward toward neat conceptual boundaries and outward chiefly toward neat departmental boundaries. [...] As we cannot crowd into subdiscipline the necessary range and variety of present concerns, neither can we crowd them into a discipline." (ibid., 9; emphasis in original)

What was left in his view was adopting a professional perspective "...without the hope or intention of becoming [a profession] in any strict sense." (1968a, 9; italics in original) Like medicine, public administration is "...science and art, theory and practice, and study and application..." and works not with one theory but with many types of theory (ibid., 10-11). As Wallace Sayre observed, Waldo did not make his professional perspective "...sufficiently explicit to the reader." (1968, 27), and Waldo himself, in the same publication, commented later that it might have been better to speak of a "professional *school* approach." (1968, 244; emphasis in original)

Finally, the identity crisis has been described by Vincent Ostrom as a consequence of reforms in government and subsequent changes in the study that 'drove' the United States away from the intentions of its founders and more and more in the direction of centralized and scientific government (1974). Ostrom advocated a return to a democratic administration that is based on (local) self-government, characterized by polycentricity, and, thus, overlapping jurisdictions (1974, 81, 88-89, 109). Advocating a move toward democratic self-government was also made by Ventriss (1991, 7). At first glance Ostrom's identity crisis may appear a different 'animal' than that identified by Simon and Waldo. Consider, though, that the shift toward a more centralized and scientific government since the early twentieth century involved increased emphasis upon efficiency, standardization, and performance (hence, the technocratic image of the American study of public administration) at the price of less attention for challenges of democracy. Thus, the study's identity is heavily biased in

favor of measurable qualities, certainly in the United States, influencing choice of methods and approaches that are considered 'scientific' in the narrow meaning identified above.

The study of public administration is not alone in its lament about identity crisis. In fact, even a superficial scan of studies and disciplines in the three main branches of knowledge (natural science, social science, humanities) clearly shows that all disciplines and studies report identity crises, and that this started roughly in the 1960s as a function of mushrooming specializations, approaches, and schools. As it turns out, public administration is no different in this respect than political science, history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, international relations, chemistry, physics, psychology, medicine, the languages, and so on and so forth (Raadschelders 2011b, 25-35) and we can add mathematics to this listing (Kline 2010, 260 and 371). For clarity, identity crises as a function of specializations, approaches, and schools is a worldwide phenomenon, but identity crisis as a function of lacking boundaries seems to be more a concern in American public administration.

When public administration's academic identity is questioned, efforts are made to improve it and this is generally done through considering the quality of its research and how it can be improved. Public administration research has been labeled as hardly cumulative (Perry and Kraemer 1986, 220; Houston and Delevan 1990, 680), as eclectic (Perry and Kraemer 1990: 364; Rhodes et al. 1995: 11), as failing to satisfy criteria for mainstream social science research (McCurdy and Cleary 1984; White 1986; Cleary, 1992, indicated some improvement), as focused on defining and conceptualizing a research problem rather than developing theory (Perry and Kraemer 1986, 219; Stallings and Ferris 1988, 585; Houston and Delevan 1990, 675-680), as being low in theory-testing (Perry and Kraemer 1986, 219; Stallings and Ferris 1988, 583; Rhodes et al. 1995, 11), as being mostly descriptive, and as containing rather simple forms of inductive statistics (Rhodes et al. 1995, 11).²¹

This literature mostly focused on American journals and, sometimes, English and Australian journals. When moving away from an American focus on the study and considering national traditions of public administration then we can see differences. Taking the Netherlands by way of example, there is really no literature investigating the quality of public administration research in articles and/or in PhD dissertations. Upon the fiftieth anniversary of the Dutch journal *Bestuurswetenschappen* an analysis was completed of the substantive trends since its inception in 1947. It does not seem that Dutch scholars, and I suspect the same for their continental European colleagues, suffer from an identity crisis comparable to that of their American brethren (Raadschelders 1998b, 32).

Meanwhile, the study's identity continues to attract some attention at the start of the twenty-first century (e.g. Stillman 1999; De Zwart 2002 in response to Farmer 1999; Vigoda 2002; Meier and O'Toole 2007 in response to Luton 2007; Raadschelders 2010). By contrast, most of the pieces questioning the quality of public administration research were published in the 1980s and 1990s, and it is unclear why this type of research seems to be off the radar screen in the past decade. One explanation could be that, perhaps, researchers have taken Hal Rainey's admonition to heart:

One wonders whether public administration scholars might do better in advancing both the identity of the field [i.e. public management] and its research and theory if fewer of us ruminated on these topics and more of us simply identified important theoretical research questions and worked on providing answers to them. (1993, 9)²²

In this approach there is an implicit assumption that research into the practice of public administration will lead to theory and thus to identity. This befits the characteristic practical approach of many American public administration scholars, knowing that their search for knowledge serves to make a positive contribution in the form of practical outcomes in people's daily lives (Shields 2008, 211).²³ Rainey does not say

that scholars should disregard pondering the nature of their study; only that extensive reflections did not seem to be going anywhere.

Nineteen years later, I agree with Rainey's observation but would like to point out that reflections about what is not being done right in the study (see the critiques mentioned above) will not get us closer to developing an academic identity of our own. Philosophers of science who started out as physicists (e.g. Paul Feyerabend, Thomas Kuhn, Stephen Toulmin), mathematicians (e.g. Carl Hempel, Imre Lakatos, Bertrand Russell, Alfred North Whitehead), chemists (e.g. Michael Polanyi), or psychologists (e.g. Karl Popper) found it important to probe the nature and meaning of their knowledge (see Loving 1991). Especially physicists have done so because the ages-old language (literally: words) available to describe the world of probabilistic quantum mechanics proved to be insufficient. The huge and surprising discoveries in and implications of quantum mechanics required careful probing of their meaning for science and for society. While social science research may not shatter worldviews to the extent that the natural sciences have, we should continue to question the basis and the meaning of our research findings, but have, hitherto, hardly done so (for exceptions: Rutgers 2004; Riccucci 2010; Lee 2011; Raadschelders 2011b). And once we do, we should do so on our own ground (cf. Ramos, see epigraph at beginning of this lecture). Another explanation for the fact that attention for the quality of public administration research has been much less is, perhaps, because scholars felt that questions about identity can never be settled satisfactorily, because neither agreement about whether it is art, craft, profession, or science, nor consensus about its core interest (decision making; association; public realm; public interest, governance, public affairs, etc., etc., see below) can be expected. So, public administration scholars withdraw in 'quants' and mathematical modeling (Raadschelders and Lee 2011, 24), although not the extent that this has happened in political science.

While Americans are exceptionally sensitive to academic

identity, and thus study this more than any other country I know of, one global problem with regard to research is that it is often focused on a specialized area since an author is expected to show intimate familiarity with the literature in her/his field of interest. It is that level of specialization that gets articles published. Wide-ranging articles, drawing upon literatures from across the social sciences, have less chance of being published since reviewers are, first, generally not familiar with literatures outside their own area and, second, often question the contribution of such pieces to their field of study (Poteete et al. 2010, 20). Junior faculty, third, are not encouraged to write such pieces given the limitations of a tenure and promotion system that encourages quantity of publications in first-tier journals (Poteete et al. 2010, 19; Nesbit et al. 2011, i24). Also, it seems that empirical, evidence-based, pieces using quantitative methods are perceived as being more scientific, but it would be appropriate to question problems with empirical research (Lehrer 2010) and to keep in mind that epistemology guides methodology (Morgan 2007) and not the other way around.

With regard to teaching, public administration curricula are and cannot be but organized in and for a specific environmental context. In Europe there are multiple public administration traditions (Verheijen and Connaughton 2003; Bouckaert and Van de Donk 2010), where the curriculum is generally organized around core courses that are still very much linked to the initial incubator for the study (e.g. law in Germany and France; organizational science in Norway; political science in the United Kingdom). In the Netherlands the study emerged from a combined influence of law and political science. It is also a study that is perceived as rather fragmented both in terms of topic as well as approach (Kickert and Toonen, 2006; Noordegraaf et al. 2006). In the United States the study is organized on the basis of the specializations, and, indeed, the introductory hand- or textbooks present the study as a string of specializations. This is no different today than in the time of Siffin (1956).

There is another difference between the various European studies and the American counterpart, and that is in the attention for philosophy, and especially for issues addressed in this lecture. That is, I suspect there is more attention for this in Europe, and certainly at the University of Leiden, than in the United States. For reasons that will become clear in the next three sections, I think it is vital that any sequence of courses at master's and doctoral level of introductory, intermediary, and advanced 'stats' and methods should be embedded in a course on ontology of existence, epistemology of public administration, and values in the public realm. Obviously, there is no agreement between scholars of what the nature of the study actually is, but such a course should address the different perspectives upon this in the literature (see discussion below of figure 1). In fact, a course where students are confronted with thoughts about ontology of existence and reality, with epistemological questions about public administration and government, and with the role and position of (societal) values in public discourse should start (introduction to-) and conclude a degree-program (advanced philosophy of public administration).²⁴ In between these bookends, the training in specific skills and learning about civilization that is provided to future scholars and civil servants should encourage a generalist's perspective upon government's role and position in society that, so I believe, is missing today (but I'm willing to debate this).

In research and teaching the bulk of attention is on the kind of knowledge that can be presented as "facts". Many courses exist that present public administration in its mechanical and technical manifestation; and, granted, both the study and government have become very good at dealing with societal problems from this technical, mechanical angle. Consequentially, and in light of the increased use of 'quants' and math, it seems that answers about the identity of the study are found in "techne" and technical sophistication rather than in ontology, epistemology, and axiology. So what is the course the study must go? We'll return to this question in the next

section; meanwhile, and in view of the title of this section, we still need to consider the disciplinary and inter-disciplinary sources of public administration as a study? It was determined above that public administration is not a disciplinary study, but that it does draw from both disciplinary and interdisciplinary sources. Disciplinary information is needed for addressing simple or tame problems. Filling potholes and garbage collection are good examples.

Interdisciplinary information is needed for any problem or challenge that transcends an individual discipline. Examples would be the approval of new medications and food stuffs, or the decision what to do with waste and garbage, or determining planning and zoning for an entire city, or small-scale managing common pool resources. These problems are still relatively easy for not only can they be solved, but they can be solved by governments as well as by other actors. Public administration in Europe appears to be especially aware of interdisciplinarity (cf. Bouckaert and Van den Donk 2010); in the United States it is discussed, but there is a gap between saying that interdisciplinary education and research are important (O'Toole 1995, 296; Schroeder et al. 2004, 94) and actually quite doing it.²⁵

What makes government distinctive from other actors is its charge to deal with wicked or complex problems that cannot be addressed and resolved by any other actor but government since the latter has the authority to make binding decisions on behalf of the entire citizenry. Governments deal with a variety of wicked problems on a daily basis, and it is thus that public administration as its study should aid governments in their endeavors. How the study does that and how it could be done will be discussed in the next section.

Public administration as an a-disciplinary study: attention for ontology, epistemology and axiology

That organized knowledge has been narrowly defined as 'science' in the past two centuries or so has had a serious consequence in practice for the content of discourse about

public policy, namely that the focus has been increasingly on facts as presented by civil servant and academic experts rather than on values as perceived by these experts, political officeholders and laymen. It is all very well and good to say that civil servants ought to lay out the value conflicts that underlie pretty much any decision and policy, as Yates suggested (see above), but the foundation upon which such can be done is weak in two ways. First, as Gawthrop observed, public servants have little comprehension of the ethical-moral democratic values that are integral to the notion of public service (1998, 19). Indeed, there is hardly attention for philosophy of government and for the fundamentally moral nature of leadership in public administration curricula.²⁶ At least in public administration attention has increased for ethics, but then usually taught as an independent course and not integrated into the rest of the curriculum. Second, and equally important, is that in a system where primacy of politics enshrines democracy, civil servants cannot be expected to express publicly the value conflicts that played out during the making of policy.

Hodgkinson went one step further than Gawthrop and argued that civil servants avoid elucidating value conflicts, withdrawing into the world of facts. In his words the “...aim of bureaucracy [is] to rationalize and routinize procedures for the resolution of value issues at the level of least organizational cost. The administrative-managerial preference for the avoidance of ‘moral issues’ or contests of principle can also be explained by the fact that lower-level resolutions may be amenable to compromise and persuasion, whereas higher-level conflicts may be irreconcilable...” (1982, 117)

He distinguished between three types of values (ibid. 110-115). Type I values are metaphysical and include, for instance, ethical codes and (religious) commandments. They are, in his words, transrational because they are based on belief. Type II values employ reasoning, hence they are rational. They are concerned

with what is desired (i.e. what is right) and this is known as duty ethics or deontology. For a value to be judged as right it must concur with the will of the majority (consensus) or based upon a reasonable assessment of consequences. Thus, type II values are fundamentally social by nature and examples he provides include pragmatism and utilitarianism. Finally, type III values are grounded in the individual’s preference structure and thus focus on the desirable. Why is something good? Why do I like or want something? This type of value he calls primitive for it is a-social and hedonistic. He calls these sub-rational and provides hedonism, logical positivism, and behaviorism as examples. It is odd to see logical positivism and behaviorism thus labeled but Hodgkinson argues that both reduce social reality to facts of nature and to individual preferences (ibid., 114). He points out several pages later that moral issues can easily be sidestepped through such avoidance or retreat mechanisms as managerialism, bureaucratic rationality and impersonality, skepticism, and positivism. However, since administrators deal with values on a day-to-day basis they still “...need a technique for resolving value conflicts which is superior to the methods of avoidance, least resistance, or lowest principle.” (ibid. 146)

How is this relevant to academe? Elsewhere I have said that there is a place for logical empiricism in the study of public administration and that its findings can inform policy making and are thus important to government (Raadschelders 2011b, 174). At the same time there are other approaches to understanding and these should not be discarded as of lesser value than what the study of “facts” can produce. One cannot help but wonder whether colleagues in the study of public administration who subscribe to logical empiricism avoid exploring the meaning of their findings beyond factual statements just as it is, according to Hodgkinson, in the nature of the administrator to avoid value-laden discussion. That question requires further empirical research, as does Gawthrop’s statement about civil servants’ lack of understanding of the ethical-moral democratic values in the

Western world. Also, Hodgkinson's ideas should be subject to further scrutiny since, for instance, his value typology has met with serious criticism (Evers 1985, 39-41).

The logical empiricist tradition that dominates the study spends little, if any, time on considering the meaning of research findings which can only be grounded in perusal of values and in understanding value-theory (i.e. axiology). Public sector values have been studied in public administration (examples: Rutgers 2010; Rutgers and Van der Meer 2010), but we need much more evidence about the extent to which value-considerations play a role in the practitioner's world. One way this can be done is through analyzing how different value-sets (for instance, legal, managerial, democratic, market-economical and political values) inform, drive, and motivate public servants and upon what grounds some values are selected over others (Franklin and Raadschelders 2004; Nabatchi 2011, 2012). Another way this can be done is by considering the ethical content of opinions and behaviors among civil servants, and including both those in superior as well as those in subordinate positions (Yukl et al. 2011). Indeed, while leaving axiology to the philosophers, the study of values is and ought to be an integral part in public administration research and teaching, because that provides the study with an idea of telos, of the good society as Alasdair MacIntyre has pointed out time and again (Overeem and Tholen 2011, 727, 733).

The narrowing of scholarship to 'science' in the social sciences has also had a major consequence in academe, namely the focus on facts on the one hand and on methods as to how to unearth these on the other. Especially in the United States training in any doctoral program contains a significant methods component, and job candidates are considered more marketable when sophistication in methods can be demonstrated through a particular research topic. In this logical-empiricist mode, reality is simply treated as a given, not worthy of contemplation. An effect of this is that the question

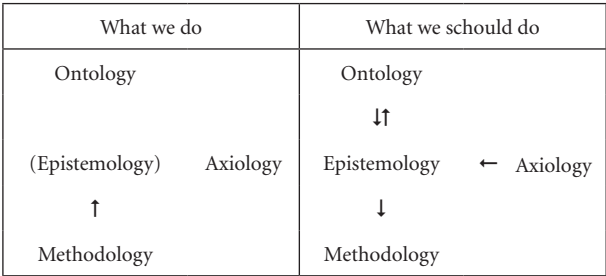
of how we can know is not asked, let alone, answered.

The question 'What is public administration?', which contains both ontological and epistemological elements, has been answered by saying that its core object is the study of decision making (cf. Simon 1947; Van Braam and Bemelmans-Videc 1986), of association (cf. V. Ostrom 1974, 106), of political economy (cf. Wamsley and Zald 1973), of shaping public affairs (Ventriss 1987, 26), of the state (cf. Debbasch 1989), of publicness (cf. Lan and Anders 2000), or of the public realm (cf. Raadschelders 2003). However, this listing alone is an indication of why we cannot hope to integrate the study around one core concept. After all, how can we agree upon what that core concept is? More generally, we may never be able to answer the question 'What is public administration?' based on its object of study (which is government in its societal context) because we may never agree on what that object of study actually is (an ontological question). It can also not be answered by arguing that rigor of methods and, even better, a study-specific methodology (Gill and Meier 2000) will establish its academic status. Methodology can never define the material object of knowledge, because, again, there is no agreement about what the object of study exactly is (that is, cannot be determined with the level of exactness that natural scientists enjoy).

An answer to the question "What is public administration" must draw upon ontological (What is reality?), epistemological (What can we know? How can we know it? What are the sources of our knowledge?) and axiological considerations (What values are at play? How do we value something?). Again, we cannot obtain knowledge by focusing on methodology only since we always have to establish first what can be measured, i.e. what can be presented as 'fact.' There is little attention for exploring the assumptions about the nature of reality and of existence (i.e. ontology) within which research cannot be but embedded. In addition, while there is attention for public sector values (an axiological interest), this area of

research is generally disconnected from the many empirical investigations that produce correlations and significance levels without considering what the outcomes mean for practice, that is, how the outcomes can be valued. Both are important, though, since ontology will generate theories about what we can know (epistemology), how we can produce that knowledge (methodology), what research practices we apply (methods), as well as how seemingly objective, research findings can be valued (axiology). What has been done in the study so far is what is imaged in the left part of figure 1; what we should do is pictured in the right side of this figure.

Figure 1: Ontology, epistemology, and axiology in the study of public administration



By way of a first effort at clarification, and looking at ontology only, consider four types of existence (and expanding upon Stout 2012, 392-393). Believing in an existence that is static and immanent, I can know on the basis of observation using methodologies of measurement (data analysis of surveys, of experiments, interviews, etc.). In this ‘history-is-efficient’ perspective²⁷ the need to contemplate the value-ness of findings is nil since values can only affect the real world in and over time. An existence that is regarded as static but transcendent would lead to knowledge through faith and/or contemplation (cf. Aurelius 2008). Third, it is also possible to depart from a notion that existence is dynamic and immanent, thus accessing both rational and non-rational experiences

by means of hermeneutics, phenomenology, interpretivism, narrativism, critical theory, and so forth. Finally, when existence is regarded as dynamic and transcendent the divine and secular are completely fused, but a methodology with which to access this is difficult to conceive (but think of Buddha’s enlightenment).

In Stout’s representation at least four ontologies are conceivable and worthy of contemplation. To simplify matters we could ponder the relationship between ontology, epistemology and axiology, starting from a dualistic (Cartesian?) presentation of reality. By and large, social scientists can be categorized in two camps with regard to how they understand reality. One camp argues that reality exists independent of the observer and, thus, can be accessed objectively. This ontological position leads to an epistemology where hypotheses are tested in search of law-like generalizations that are building blocks for theory. Since reality is independent from the observer, values do not come into play into how reality is defined. Truly, what we can know is produced through a scientific method employing mathematical modeling and/or quantitative-statistical methods. The specific set of ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological choices described in the above is best represented by logical empiricism and is (widely or not?) regarded as the most scientific in a narrow sense of the word. This logical empiricism is based on a static and immanent ontology.

Figure 2: Features of various approaches to public administration research

logical empiricism	objective reality exists, is given and tangible	develop testable hypotheses; law-like generalizations;	value free; context unimportant	scientific method
interpretivism	objective reality does not exist; reality is relative and dependent upon the subjective perspective of independent actors	learning about social phenomena study of of language, culture, interactions	facts and values cannot be severed; attention to context;	figurational research; thick description
narrativism	objective reality does not exist; “reality” is understood through narratives	learning about social phenomena by listing to stories	facts and values are inexorably linked; there is no ultimate Truth (fact)	figurational; stories as opposed to chronologies
critical theory	objective reality exists, but is distorted by our values such that we cannot grasp it	three types of knowledge: technical, cognitive, and emancipatory	research should seek to emancipate the dispossessed	no concrete methodology; serves as a way of correcting positivist/interpretivist research
pragmatism	reality is constructed through transactional experiences of humans in a constantly changing environment	knowledge results from experience and use of scientific method	no fundamental difference between facts and values; values are relative and situational and change when culture changes	various approaches of quantitative and figurational research emphasizing social interactions between individuals
action theory	reality is constructed through moral discourse; is and ought are not separate	knowledge is constructed through ethical considerations	there is no researcher neutrality, nor a distinction between fact and values	figurational tools to “learn by doing”; “living one’s theory into practice; plan, act, observe, reflect, repeat”

Nota bene: this table was adapted from a more encompassing table put together by James Comeaux, Lisa Frazier, Lisa Gajary, Kristin Harlow, Hyungto Hur, Olga Kondratjeva, Stephen Roll, and Nicole Thomas, during the course Public Affairs 890 - Logic of Inquiry taught by Prof. Anand Desai during the winter quarter of 2012 at The Ohio State University.

Critical theorists also believe that an objective reality exists, but that it is distorted by how we value things. They distinguish between technical, cognitive, and emancipatory knowledge; especially the latter requires understanding of the extent to which values are relative and situational.

The other camp includes all those who believe that an objective reality does not exist, that it is dependent upon the subjective perspective of independent actors (interpretivism), or that it is articulated by a narrator (narrativism), or constructed through the interaction between individuals and the social environment in which they live (pragmatism), or constructed through moral discourse.

In figure 2 these various approaches to understanding government in its societal context are summarized. The question as to whether the world is objective or constructed is a “belief question” and it has a major consequence for public policy and for how we study public administration. If the world is objective, as logical empiricists hold, then whatever we study cannot be subject to valuation since personal perspectives do not enter the analysis. However, even logical empiricists cannot escape the values that inexorably come in when deciding what and how to measure something. That is, in terms of epistemology and methodology values cannot be but taken into consideration.

What is Public Administration?

So we ask again: What is public administration? First, if the study of public administration was regarded as a science in the narrow meaning defined earlier, and thus leaving art,

craft, and profession by the wayside, its relevance to the real world would be very limited. This is not an idle observation, for it has happened in parts of political science.²⁸ Instead, the nature of the study rests upon a careful and delicate balancing of art, craft, profession and science. Second, all of the social sciences study some aspect or other of government in its manifold relations with society. In this sense, public administration does not ‘own’ its object of interest in the same way that physicists own theirs. Third, public administration not only lacks boundaries around its object of interest within the academy, it also cannot prevent people other than scholars from defining what its object of interest is and/or ought to be and what should be done for it. Hence, public administration largely lacks the attributes that could make it a ‘discipline’ in the nineteenth century sense of that word. It uses disciplinary knowledge only when dealing with simple, tame problems.²⁹

At the very least, the study is interdisciplinary, an umbrella discipline to use Whitley’s concept (1976), that is informed but not derived from the social sciences, by the natural and physical sciences (including engineering), and by the humanities. Public administration draws upon a variety of knowledge sources (Raadschelders 2011b, 76-99). The question then becomes how can government be studied? The answer to that question reveals that the study of public administration will continue to face challenges of old but always has to search for new answers given that time and context are always in flux. Which are these old/new challenges?

First, and considering handbooks, the study can be presented as a string of specializations, as is the case in the United States, or from a more holistic perspective on the basis of a meta-framework (e.g. Raadschelders 2003), as is more common in continental Europe. The study in the USA is much more focused on developing practical skills, and on being a science based on facts, while in the old continent there is much more emphasis upon Wissenschaft with a focus on developing worldviews and macro-perspectives upon government’s role

and position in society. To be sure, the understanding of government and the training of (future) civil servants requires attention both for skills and for worldviews.

Flowing from this is a second challenge, namely that of connecting micro- (individual, group) and meso- (organization), and macro-levels (society) of analyses (Merton 1967; Luhmann 1985; Simon 1985, 303; Mouzelis 1991, 107) since only that will help probe the big questions in society today. That is, we cannot assume that analyses of datasets collected at the micro-level provide understanding of trends at the macro-level (cf. fallacy of the wrong level).

These big questions, third, have to be addressed through multiple-methods research and not be limited to that which allows measurement and quantification. The whole-hearted embrace of quants and mathematical-looking models has severely limited government's ability to address complex policy problems (Nabatchi et al. 2011, i34) and the study's ability to address the same has become as limited. What do measures of how many 'friends' people have on, e.g. Facebook and MySpace mean? What does it mean to know how often people interact with others through, e.g. tweets? Do we really understand how these means of communication and interaction have influenced the nature and quality of whatever face-to-face interaction is left and of how this has influenced the arena of public debate? And, what impact does this intensified and extensified, but changed, communication and interaction have upon the functioning of government? To use an example more clearly linked to the public sector: What does it mean that the number of high school drop-outs is x? What does it mean that a school is successful in passing a large percentage of its students through state-designed tests? And do these tests adequately capture the quality of education offered to our children? Certainly, the world is aware of the challenges that American elementary and secondary education faces, but let us not be smug or complacent for comparable declines in educational abilities have been reported in other Western countries, the

Netherlands included. Other big questions that can only be resolved by and through governments include: hunger, poverty, global warming, societal (demographic) diversity, religious strife and the conscious, persistent, and malicious misrepresentation of world religions, the dumping of waste, health care, just to name a few.³⁰

Big questions, fourth, cannot be answered through the outlook or worldview of the specialist. Most civil servants today complete a college education and start their career as a specialist. Many will rise to middle managerial levels and some will reach higher managerial positions. Specialist expertise is required at entry level in knowledge organizations (and government is certainly a huge group of knowledge organizations), but what is expected at middle and certainly at higher levels is a generalist perspective upon the organization in its relevant environment. *The study of public administration trains and educates specialists in generalist perspectives*, and thus it must continue to find contemporary 'solutions' to this old problem of how to present this generalist perspective and, in the process, bridging practitioners and academicians.

Finally, fifth, all of the above requires that scholars of public administration continue to balance research and education. Ideally, research feeds into education and vice versa. While, understandably, research in public administration is often as specialized as research in other disciplines, public administration scholars should not shy away from thinking about how to study big questions that can only be addressed by drawing upon widely dispersed sources of knowledge and using multiple methods of inquiry. Scholarship in our field must ...grow out of actual social tensions, needs, "troubles" [...] Any problem of scientific inquiry that does not grow out of actual (or "practical") social conditions is fictitious. (Dewey 1938, 499)

Once public administrationists do so, they will be the "go-to-guys and gals" civil servants need to help untangle wicked

problems. This would immediately feed into education and would rise to the challenge that Merriam, Simon, Waldo, and Dimock laid before those who train the next generation of generalists in government:

It is to be presumed and desired that students of government will play a larger role in the future than in the past in shaping of the types of civic education; but this will not be possible unless a *broader view is taken of the relation of government to the other social sciences, and the function of the political in the social setting*. (Merriam 1934, 97; emphasis in original)
...the proper training of 'administrators' lies not in the narrow field of administrative theory, but in the broader field of the social sciences generally. (Simon 1957 [1947], 247)
...administrative thought must establish a working relationship with every major province in the realm of human learning. (Waldo 1984 [1948], 203)
Administration is, or at least ought to be, wedded to subjects such as philosophy, literature, history, and art, and not merely to engineering, finance and structure. (Dimock 1958, 5)

This type of broad-ranging education augments the inevitable specialization in the contemporary academy, and may do so through more or better knowledge integration in such a way that E.O. Wilson's hope for "synthesizers" becomes reality, although perhaps not in the manner he hopes for (i.e. with the natural sciences leading the way):

Profession-bent students should be helped to understand that in the twenty-first century the world will not be run by those who possess mere information alone. [Knowledge] is destined to become global and democratic. (...). We are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom. The world henceforth will be run by synthesizers... (Wilson 1998, 269)

These five comments characterize the study of public administration as one that serves practitioners and academics, as one that is interdisciplinary when drawing from various knowledge sources in and outside academe in order to

advance the understanding of government in society, as one that has to be a-disciplinary when dealing with wicked problems, and as one where pedagogy is targeted to develop civil servants' sensitivity to trends in their social environment. This is nothing new, but we have not organized our study and curricula accordingly.

The way forward: public administration for tolerant democracy

The future of public administration as a study rests with providing understanding of wicked (i.e. complex) societal problems to civil servants, political officeholders, and citizens. This requires that we complement and embed the 'skills' angle (public budgeting and finance, program evaluation, human resource management, etc.) with and in courses on, at least, (disciplinary) perspectives on modern civilization, on the development of government over time, and on political theories about the relation between government and citizen. Such a curriculum should not shy away from being grounded in, as Ramos called it, a substantive theory of human associated life (1981, 24-43), a notion articulated earlier by Vincent Ostrom. Thus, in reference to the epigraph by Russell at the beginning of this lecture, *we should not only be Spartans who focus on training in methods and skills, but also Athenians who form the mind*.

The study of public administration is broad ranging with many specializations. But, as Chester Newland, editor in chief of the *Public Administration Review* between 1984-1990 observed, eighteen years ago, it is a study that lacks connectedness (1994, 488). The study draws upon many sources of knowledge and is thus interdisciplinary by nature. However, while its scholars have been connecting to and using other bodies of knowledge, it has also become clear that the study can do much better at being an interdisciplinary, umbrella study (Wright 2011) when so needed. In fact, and expanding upon the statement that public administration is an "interdisciplinary applied field" (Hou et al. 2011, i45), interdisciplinarity in solutions offered to social problems may well improve the applied

quality of the study. But, the study should also do better at developing a-disciplinary perspectives when such are needed, especially when confronting the challenges of the big problems and questions briefly mentioned above. Given that public administration is art, craft, profession, and science, it is in public administration's interdisciplinary and a-disciplinary qualities that both generalists and specialists, as well as academicians and practitioners are served best. Public administration should focus as much on "real people who do real work" (Box 1992, 66) as it does on analyzing datasets.

All this sounds rather abstract; in fact, it sounds exactly what one expects an academician to say. Hence, it is why this lecture will conclude with a concrete example that illustrates why the study can only serve government and citizens when it develops its historical, ontological, epistemological, and axiological elements, making these into standard fare in any course. Providing some outlines of the future of the study actually requires that we, once again, though briefly, step back in time to some one-and-half centuries ago when governments were faced with multiple wicked problems as a consequence of unprecedented rapid industrialization, urbanization and population growth. It is fair to say, that governments and their students have done very well in solving many of these problems, but have done so at a rather mechanical and/or technical level. Governments have built sewage systems, were instrumental in developing transport infrastructures, have established health care systems, have developed building and housing codes, have regulated the market, and so on and so forth, and all this to an extent inconceivable a hundred or hundred-and-fifty years ago. In trying to go forward and responding to societal needs, governments have addressed social problems such as poverty as a technical issue, that is, providing some degree of social safety net through, for instance, unemployment benefits and social security pensions. Thus social security should really be called economic security. Obviously, the success with which governments have tackled these and many other social and economic problems, vary

per country and culture, but I dare say that if our great-grandparents could experience what role and position government holds in society today, and the extent to which government policies and services contribute to overall well-being, they would be astonished.

So, the major social and economic changes of the latter part of the nineteenth century have, by and large, been tackled, perhaps not always satisfactory but nevertheless resolved. Perhaps we could even say that it was possible to tackle these since most pre-World War II societies were quite homogeneous. Of course, there were political differences, but these could be overcome through elites seeking compromise, as happened in the Netherlands until the 1960s. Knowing that the major problem of societies during the second industrial revolution concerned the concentration and rapid growth of populations (and all its consequences) and the alienation of work, what is the major problem of governments today and why is it even more important today to pay careful attention to these historical, ontological, epistemological and axiological considerations than in the past?

Allow me to suggest that the major challenge many democratic countries face today is that of the rapid increase of societal diversity almost everywhere in the Western world. Societies that were relatively homogeneous could take in refugees without fear of them changing the social-cultural make-up. After the Second World War, however, and especially since the 1980s, the socially, politically and economically disadvantaged of the developing world have flooded into the horns of plenty of the Western world. The Netherlands is certainly no exception (Van der Meer and Raadschelders 2010) and the tolerance it prided itself on for centuries has been stretched to the point that some seek and get political gain by playing on a basic fear: the loss of (national) identity. A study of public administration that systematically includes attention for historical, ontological, epistemological and axiological considerations in its research and teaching, is much better

able to be of service to citizens and their governments by piercing populist stereotypes and fears. The master narrative of the Western world, with its foundation in Judeo-Christian worldviews and Greco-Roman political, territorial, and organizational structures is what much of the Western world has been built upon since the twelfth century, and no longer suffices to connect people with very different cultural, religious, and political backgrounds (Migdal 1997, 213, 231; Raadschelders 2002, 19-20). The part that concerns the Greco-Roman influence, which is about the potential of democracy (Greek) and the structuring of government through layered territorialization and organizational bureaucratization (Rome), is widespread throughout the world. That part of the Western narrative will remain for a long time to come, since it is how governments nowadays strive to structure their functioning. The Judeo-Christian element, however, requires careful thought in today's multi-ethnic societies. That part of this master narrative is under stress. Or to be more precise, the temperate elements of the Judeo-Christian and Islamic cultures should be rekindled since historically each accepted diversity within and between societies (Siedentop 2001, 193). The best contribution the study of public administration can make is to allow room for the considerations outlined in this lecture and how these re-inform its traditional, practical focus upon the managerial challenges of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. We should not only gather data and identify trends in the search for social laws, we should also consider the welfare and well-being of society as Commager suggested (1950, 205), as well as the emotions and passions that drive human beings. To quote Siedentop, can we really understand "...the sexual act without any reference to love or desire?" (2001, 37)³¹ This means that scholars of public administration should not only, for instance, identify, map, and measure values, but also explore and contemplate ways to incorporate these in public discourse and policy. Political officeholders, as well as those who aspire to political office, should not pander to cheap, populist, and stereotypical imagery. Instead they should have the courage to discuss collective values that

transcend particular secular or religiously inspired mantras and create platforms in which people can explore each other's value-sets from a fundamental respect for humanity in all its variety. Civil servants have the training and education to inform public policy with the facts as well as with the value judgments used in the making of policy, but only when our study has given them access to thoughts and literatures across the spectrum of possibilities and perspectives. I will not challenge the primacy of politics doctrine, but people know tacitly that political officeholders nowadays rely upon balanced information provided by their civil servants. While Max Weber expressed concern about the possibility that democracy could be drowned out by bureaucracy, and while he spoke of the inexorable march of bureaucracy³², I think that his anguish about this can be laid to rest.³³ By and large, civil servants, and I regard that neutral term as much better than that of the pejoratively sounding 'bureaucrats,' have served their political officeholders admirably as well as the citizens who they are themselves. When all is said and done, who has responded to citizen demand in the past 150 years but the civil service?

A study of public administration is truly mature when it includes the understanding that values play an important role in contemporary multi-ethnic society and, thus, provide a foundation to policy making. Anything less will not serve the kind of democracy and government that transcends the political, religious, and cultural divisions so common in contemporary Western societies. Anything less should relegate the study of public administration to obscurity. And, while not ever having had the ability to read tea leaves, I profess to expect that scholars of public administration will come through, just as governments have so far, by trial and error.

Having come to the end of my lecture, I would like to say a few words of gratitude.

First, I would like to thank the Board of the University of Leiden and the Board of the College of Social Sciences and all

who in some way contributed to this appointment for their efforts to that effect and for the trust placed in me. In the years before us I hope to be of value to the development of the Institute of Public Administration and this university.

Professor Van der Meer, dear Frits, we have known each other for more than thirty years and have come to know each quite well, and not only because we have written so much together. Your friendship is valuable to me and I will cherish it, just as I enjoyed our collaboration for publications and in various arenas.

Professor Steunenberg, dear Bernard, we have met several times in the past fourteen years and I very much appreciate your help with my appointment. I look forward to working with you, even when I suspect that we have different opinions about the nature of public administration.

Professor Torenvliet, dear René, I had not met you before I came to the Netherlands a few weeks ago. I am equally grateful to you for your help with my appointment. And, so I have come to understand, like Bernard you think differently about public administration than I do. Well, gentlemen, that is just fine, because then we can have debate.

Professor Toonen, dear Theo, I met you in 1985 and since then we have been in contact with each other in various ways. Especially the fact that I was appointed to your chair in Comparative Administration here in Leiden has had multiple consequences, both personally as well as professionally. I am grateful for your friendship and professional guidance and look forward to further cooperation.

Professor Stillman, dear Richard, we met in Leiden in 1991 and kept in touch. Our interactions became far more intensive since the spring of 2005. To have been the managing editor during your tenure as editor in chief of *Public Administration Review*, one of the world's largest journals in our field, has

been one of the precious periods in my career. I know we'll stay in touch.

Esteemed colleagues of the Institute of Public Administration and of the College of the Social Sciences, I have worked with pleasure at, what was called back then, the Department of Public Administration and it is with much enthusiasm that I now return. I look forward to the renewed cooperation with those whom I have known for years as well to cooperation with people I met recently.

Dear colleagues and students at the John Glenn School of Public Affairs, it is truly a pleasure and delight to work among you since last summer. The enthusiasm, passion, and sheer intellectual prowess with which you engage in public affairs is invigorating. That I have found friendship was not expected but has only added to my commitment to our school.

Dear students, public administration is a wonderful study in that becomes particularly apparent when we manage to connect the technical intricacies to challenges of valuation. It will be a pleasure to teach you and I expect the same effort from you as you can expect from me.

Dear mom, dear family members, it is a pleasure that you can be here today, and a pleasure that we have seen each other with some frequency after we moved to the United States in 1998. Mom, I appreciate very much that you convinced dad that I was not suited for anything but studying, thus preventing that I had to work at age 16. Since Mar is no longer with us, I have dedicated this lecture to her.

Dearest Julie, Kitty and John, it is wonderful that you are here and not only for today's lecture but also to visit the country where we lived as a family for several years. Julie, your patience with my study and habits is truly heartwarming, and while our careers have led us to live and work in separate locations, I will always need your love and guidance. Kitty and John, you were

both born in this country, in Delft and Leiden respectively, and I wonder if the two weeks here will improve your Dutch but know you are thoroughly enjoying this trip.

Esteemed audience, people live in groups and in the busyness of day-to-day life too little time is taken to reflect upon the deeper questions of the nature of association. I do so and often in the company of friends, most have of whom have come today. That you are friends is a blessing.

I have spoken.

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Notes

- * An earlier, much shorter and very different version of this lecture was published in the November/December issue of *Public Administration Review* (2011). Since the print proofs for that article were corrected (August 2011) elements of this lecture have been presented at the John Glenn School of Public Affairs of The Ohio State University (September 2011) and the Maxwell School for Citizenship and Public Affairs of Syracuse University (October 2011). I have benefitted greatly from the input of various colleagues, but most from the gracious, patient and careful feedback upon several iterations of this lecture from my colleague at the Glenn School, Professor Anand Desai, and from Professor Tina Nabatchi, a colleague at the Maxwell School. Finally, the English version of this text was edited by Travis Whetsell, who will start this fall in the Ph.D. program at the Glenn School and is currently the managing editor of *Armed Forces & Society*; the Dutch version has been carefully edited by Mrs. Wilma der Weduwe-de Groot, JD, whose training and experience as lawyer and judge gave her the excellent Dutch language skills that I am lacking.
- 1 When talking about the study I use 'public administration'; when talking about the world of public practitioners I use 'government'
 - 2 On a side note: some policies or actions may not benefit from citizen input, especially when they concern non-contentious issues (Irvin and Stansbury 2004, 62).
 - 3 The identity crisis concept was first coined by developmental psychologist Erik H. Erikson (1968), and refers to the period during adolescence that teenagers and young adults are in search of their identity.
 - 4 Antarctica, of course, is subject to governance through a vast system of international regulations. The Antarctic Treaty System outlines roles and responsibilities for a wide array of actors.
 - 5 Often, definitions of state are centered on the legitimate use of coercion or force, a Weberian emphasis that is often

accepted (e.g. Tilly 1975; Dyson 1980). The legitimate use of force, however, is just one example of the larger category, namely, of binding decisions. Furthermore, and especially in the contemporary world, there are very few societies where governments still share the authority to make binding decisions for all citizens with other societal associations (such as in the past organized religion).

- 6 What citizens desire a good society to be includes the wish for a good government. Declining trust in government, as reported to varying degrees, is a serious problem in most of the Western world, and requires attention for the dynamics in the relations between political officeholders (and how they stereotype bureaucracy) and civil servants (and how the primacy of politics doctrine keeps them in the shadows). See for the United States "Public Trust in Government: 1958-2010," Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, released April 18, 2010; accessed April 3 2012. For a comparative perspective see Bouckaert 2011.
- 7 "Chinking in" is an activity that refers to log-cabin construction, when the logs, once fitted, had to be chinked, i.e. filled in with mud, clay, or moss (Stillman 1999, 57).
- 8 Obviously, there is already a very practical tradition of teaching in public administration before industrialization in several parts of the world, for instance, the training of civil servants in ancient China (since the Han dynasty, second century BCE), in ancient India (cf. *Arthaśāstra*), in Korea (where the first school started 600 years ago), in Germany since the second half of the 17th century, in France since the early 18th century, and in Britain since the second half of the 18th century (e.g. the Indian Civil Service).
- 9 Waldo spoke of the 'compleat administrator' (1948/2009, 99). This term has also been used by Johnson (1982).
- 10 *Wissenschaft* is best translated as 'branch of knowledge' and is the term used in the Germanic languages (e.g. *wetenschap* in Dutch, *vetenskap* in Swedish). Science in its broader pre-eighteenth century meaning as 'organized

body of knowledge' is still used in the Romanic languages (e.g. *science* in French, *ciencia* in Spanish, *scienza* in Italian) (Raadschelders 2011b, 41).

- 11 The term logical empiricism is preferred above that of positivism since the latter term could be confused with Auguste Comte's understanding of positivism. Furthermore, while Simon felt comfortable treating 'empiricism' and 'positivism' as synonymous (1997, 68), positivism or logical positivism is really a type of empiricism because some other types of empiricism (e.g. taxonomy, typology) cannot be labeled (logical) positivist (see Phillips 1987, 41).
- 12 The term 'law-like generalization' is quite frequently used in the social sciences. Thinking it through, though, it is a bit of an oxymoron: a generalization has the properties of a law or it does not.
- 13 Women's Studies is also found in Dutch universities since the 1970s, and the University of Leiden had such a department until recently.
- 14 As far as I know, the first scholar to observe that people perceive things both through the use of their senses and ("outside their essence") through their ability to think is Ibn Khaldūn (2005/1967, 333).
- 15 With regard to political science see, for instance, Voegelin 1974, 4-5.
- 16 Aristotle distinguished constitutive or intrinsic causes from active or extrinsic causes. The former include formal cause (what kind of thing is it?) and material cause (what is it made of?); the latter are concerned with efficient causes (how did the thing come into being) and final or ultimate causes (why did the thing come into being?).
- 17 *Nota bene*, clearly public administration is all of these and more; furthermore, the aforementioned other studies are not disciplines either. It is, however, doubtful that becoming a discipline is a viable expectation for the future of the study as will be explained below.
- 18 Usually the contrast is between quantitative and qualitative work, but, while the concept of 'quantitative

work' adequately captures its content and method, the concept of 'qualitative work' is very unsatisfying. Thus, I prefer the concept of 'figuration' by Norbert Elias, which emphasizes that we can only understand the world when considering that social reality is the product of planned and unplanned forces and processes that stem "...from the ways in which people [are] bound together and by pressures that they place [...] on one another." (see Elias 1987, 166; and Linklater & Mennell 2010, 388).

- 19 This is especially so in the United States; continental European public administration scholars seem to be much less concerned with the academic reputation and stature of the study.
- 20 Whether the 'hostility' Waldo mentions is endemic or related to the specific time-context in which he wrote (i.e. political science was in its behavioral revolution) can be debated.
- 21 Most of these findings were based on analyses of the content of *Public Administration Review* for specified years, some in comparison to other journals. The McCurdy and Cleary piece focuses on the quality of PhD dissertations.
- 22 Chester Newland referred to these ruminations as "belly button pieces"; communication by email from David Rosenbloom to author, April 5, 2011.
- 23 On a side note: when and how public administration research has made a difference in people's lives should be systematically investigated.
- 24 One could argue that needs of master's and doctoral students are different, and, indeed, that is how many programs are structured. However, would it not facilitate exchange of experience and knowledge when those who are in a public service career have had the same training as those who pursued an academic career. Furthermore, both master's and doctoral students need that generalist's perspective: the former because they need the skill to look beyond the responsibilities that come with their own position, the latter because they need the skill to assess the

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meaning and consequences of their work for society at large.

- 25 One prime example that comes to mind is the extensive work done on common pool resource management by Elinor Ostrom and her many associates all over the world, using, for instance, both game theory as well as thick description to capture, understand, and interpret the thousands of cases that are now archived at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis of Indiana University (for overview see Toonen 2010). Her work involves multiple methods and uses interdisciplinary sources, and is in its theoretical orientation highly relevant to scholars of various background but, at the same time, in its applied element, useful to CPR managers and (local) government officials (see Ostrom 1992; Poteete et al. 2010). Whether the work done about CPRM is also a-disciplinary can be debated, but generally human association becomes a wicked problem beyond the geographically local level where stakeholders/participants know one another. An illustration of that is a recent publication on environmental management (Balint et al. 2011).
- 26 The study of public administration is not alone in this, for the same is the case in business administration. In fact, the decline of ethics courses in the business administration curricula has had devastating consequences for economy and society in the United States. For a sobering and shocking analysis of American business administration education since the 1880s see Khurana (2007). There may be attention for corporate social responsibility in the private sector, but talking about it has not seemed to influence actual behavior. John Ralston Saul notes that business school graduates are “addicts of power, divorced from questions of morality.” and that most professionals are “...trained with an obsession for detail, accumulation of facts, and internal logic.” (1993, 22-23)
- 27 In relation to the remark made above about measurement being possible only when something is established as ‘fact’,

the ‘history-is-efficient’ perspective is nicely captured in the following quote: “A fact only becomes such when it loses all temporal qualifications and becomes incorporated into a large body of knowledge drawn upon by others. Consequently, there is an essential difficulty associated with writing the history of a fact; it has, by definition, lost all historical reference.” (Latour & Woolgar 1986, 106)

- 28 There are a variety of American political scientists who are now of the opinion that their study has estranged and/or removed itself from reality too much. For a brief summary of their concerns see Raadschelders (2011b, 28-29). At issue here is, of course, that what social scientists believe ‘science’ and ‘scientific method to be, is very different from what natural scientists regard as science. In the words of Steven Weinberg, a Nobel laureate (physics, 1979): “We do not have a fixed scientific method [...] most scientists have very little idea of what the scientific method is.” (2001, 85)
- 29 Cf. a project my colleague Anand Desai and I are working on.
- 30 Meanwhile, there is a big epistemological question for scholars and that is about the role of measurement in knowledge creation. What are the limits of measurement? When will measurement be insufficient in capturing reality?
- 31 Peter Winch expressed himself in comparable terms more than 40 years ago, i.e. that human behavior can only be understood in a social context: “...would it be intelligent to try to explain how Romeo’s love for Juliet enters into his behaviour in the same terms as we might want to apply to the rat whose sexual excitement makes him run across an electrically charged grid to reach his mate? Does not Shakespeare do this much better?”
- 32 Consider Weber’s somewhat gloomy expectation of the “unaufhaltsame Vormarsch der Bürokratisierung” in relation to his thought that democracy would be constrained by bureaucracy, cf. “Wie wird Demokratie

auch in diesem beschränkten Sinn überhaupt möglich sein.” (See Weber 1980, 836)

- 33 Just consider Patrick Dunleavy’s (1991) work showing how civil servants have been very able to cut bureaucracy both in terms of personnel size as well as in terms of regulations.

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In this inaugural lecture a future for the study of public administration is outlined that is based on the idea that it is not a traditional discipline, with clearly demarcated boundaries, but one that uses various disciplinary knowledge sources (without being defined by them) and is thus interdisciplinary. It is also an a-disciplinary field of study since the wicked problems that government and study face, each time requires that we draw upon unique sets of knowledge sources in order to arrive at some degree of resolution. In this sketch of a future for the study of public administration much is said about the need of attention for historical, ontological, epistemological and axiological considerations when addressing and attempting to understand the big questions and challenges that government and society face. It is claimed that the study places itself in a straightjacket when trying to develop as a 'science' narrowly defined on the basis of logic-empirical, evidence-based research. Public administration research and teaching, as well as consultancy and the world of government are served by a study that approaches the rich variety of societal problems and collective challenges from the largest possible range of knowledge sources and a as broad as possible range of approaches.



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